

## Robbi Nester

### Consequence

I spread the seed, standing  
on the hard-packed earth  
full of hope, and as I did,  
I saw the greening of a tiny  
volunteer—something blown in  
by the wind, brought by a bird.  
By rights, I knew, I ought to  
rip it out and let the chosen  
crop have room enough  
to spread its roots, but  
in this tiny niche, I felt  
a power no one else  
could exercise. Outside  
the bounds, I couldn't  
stop the thousands  
suffering and dying,  
but here, I could afford  
to be benevolent,  
dispensing life or death  
over the subjects  
of my tiny realm.  
All that week, while  
watering, I watched  
it grow, taking pleasure  
in the leaves unfurling,  
taller every day. The seeds  
I planted barely got a start,  
shadowed as they were  
under the brazen leaves  
of the intruder, cuckoo  
in the nest. Seeing  
their pale and spindly  
stalks, I suddenly grew  
cruel, grabbing the alien  
growth by its fat stem,  
throwing it over  
the fence to take root  
where it would, or die.

**Robbi Nester** shelters in place in Southern California. She is the author of 4 books of poems, the latest being *Narrow Bridge* (Main Street Rag, 2019), and has also edited 3 anthologies. Her latest of these, *The Plague Papers*, a celebration of virtual museums, is

currently looking for a home. Her poems, essays, and reviews have appeared widely in journals and anthologies. She is an elected member of the Academy of American Poets.